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**LABOUR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS  
AND THE TRADE UNIONS IN  
POST-WAR JAPAN (1)**

**—REVIVAL AND REESTABLISHMENT OF THE LABOUR-  
MANAGEMENT RELATIONS BASED ON SENIORITY—**

*By* Eitaro KISHIMOTO\*

The present article is a continuation of "The Characteristics of Labour-Management Relations in Japan and Their Historical Formation", *The Kyoto University Economic Review*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Oct. 1965) and Vol. 36, No. 1 (Apr. 1966).

**I The Revival of the Labour-Movement after Japan's  
Defeat in World War II**

In Japan the organization of trade unions became prevalent after October 1945. It was caused by severe inflation and the serious shortage of food, in short, by the complete breakdown which followed Japan's defeat in World War II. It was also promoted by orders from General Headquarters abolishing the Law for the Maintenance of the Public Peace and other oppressive laws and by the policy of protecting the trade union movement. As soon as workers organized trade unions, they went on strike demanding the democratization of offices and factories, the right to organ-

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ize trade unions, and triple or quintuple wage increases (in pre-war Japan we had not even a trade union law).

The table below indicates the numbers of newly organized trade unions and the workers who joined them from 1945 (the year of Japan's defeat in World War II) to 1947.

Numbers of Trade Unions & Members, 1945-1947

	1945		1946		1947	
	August	After Sept.	First Half Y.	Second H. Y.	First H. Y.	Second H. Y.
Number of Trade Unions	0	855	9,506	4,892	6,708	5,962
Number of Union Members	0	602,706	2,816,470	864,032	1,209,392	790,655
Number of Union Members per Union	0	705	296	177	180	131

(Source: The Labour Statistics & Investigation Bureau, Ministry of Labour, *Report on Labour Unions*.)

These trade unions were, in most cases, organized within individual enterprises, each of them being independent on other trade unions. Most of them consisted, not of factory workers alone, but of factory and office workers together. They were often called 'mixed trade unions', in which every employee, factory worker or office clerk, was obliged to join. In other words, as soon as a worker was employed by an enterprise as a regular employee, he was automatically obliged to be a member of the trade union in the enterprise and union duties were deducted from his wages or salary. Those who were not regular employees of the enterprise could become neither members nor leaders of the union. Thus, in the circumstances of the liberal airs and poverty-stricken life of post-war Japan, trade unions continued to be spontaneously organized at a fast tempo. They had an intra-enterprise-union characteristic which involved the danger of them becoming unions of a vertical nature, that is trade unions secretly controlled by the managers.

On the 10th October 1945, Komakichi Matsuoka, Suehiro Nishio, Minoru Takano, and other labour-movement leaders who had been active in pre-war days had a meeting at Tōkyō Kuramae Kōgyō Kaikan. There they talked about organizing a national federation of trade unions and adopted a policy for organizing Sōdōmei (the Japan Federation of Trade Unions), the only nation-wide institution for organized workers in Japan, in spite of different opinions as to which political party to support. Other basic policies were to achieve the freedom to support any political party and to endeavor to rehabilitate the Japanese economy. It is said that Kyūichi Tokuda, Yoshio Shiga, Shōichi Kasuga, Ritsu Itō, Hiroshi Hasegawa, and other communists who were freed from jail agreed to these policies.

The communists at that time, whose principle was based on Red Unionism, could never align themselves with the 'socialist democrats' or 'social reformists' represented by Matsuoka and Nishio. For they were severely antagonistic to each other. In the *Red Flag* of 15th October the communists started to denounce Matsuoka, Nishio, and others:

It is clear that those corrupt union officials are trying desperately hard to organize trade unions now and make the best use of them as their elective body or means for success. But they are aware of no other way of organizing them than by connections, that is, by factions...those damned corrupt union officials...let us purge those who betray workers! We must disclose the truth that they are the agents of imperialists and war criminals; we must attack their imperialism; we must reveal that they are enemies of democracy...

The communists took a leading part in organizing the Kantō District Liaison Council of Trade Unions which was formed on the 27th January 1946. Their activities were carried on in such a situation that the mutual relations and joint struggles carried on by intra-enterprise unions and the trend of industrial unions began to prevail between late 1945 and early 1946. Throughout the campaign they tried to organize a national institution of trade unions which could compete with Sōdōmei. Then, they organized industrial unions (for instance, the Japan Press and Communication Workers' Union) which were to function as the industrial organs of intra-enterprise unions for purposes of liaison and joint struggles. Furthermore, they set up a preparatory meeting for the congress of industrial unions in February 1946; finally they succeeded in establishing Sanbetsu Kaigi (the Congress of Industrial Unions of Japan) on the 19th August 1946. Twenty-one industrial unions consisting of 1,574,169 members joined it.

In the meantime those who intended to organize Sōdōmei continued to strengthen the organization in competition with the communists. At last they organized Sōdōmei on the 1st August 1946, a short time before the establishment of Sanbetsu Kaigi. Sōdōmei was joined by 1,466 trade unions belonging to the preparatory meetings of 34 prefectural federations and consisting of 660,460 members, and by 463 trade unions belonging to the four industrial unions (the Japan League of Transportation and Traffic Workers' Unions, the National Federation of Textile Industry Workers' Unions, the National Tobacco Workers' Union, and the National League of Mine Workers' Unions) and consisting of 401,439 members. The trade unions belonging to it totalled 1,699, and the workers 855,399 (deducting those that joined both the prefectural federations and industrial unions). It was characteristic of Sōdōmei that the trade unions belonging to it greatly delayed in organizing industrial unions where as the prefectural federations were dominant. The misfortune in the labour movement in pre-war Japan, that trade unions had often split because of their opposing political stands, was reiterated after the revival of the labour movement in post-war Japan.

What measures did these two national institutions of trade unions intend to take for protecting the livelihood of the workers?

Sōdōmei urgently propagated the slogans of its campaign as soon as it was organized. These slogans contained all the necessary items for protecting the workers' livelihood. Some of them were 'Equal pay for equal work', 'Equal opportunity of same work and promotion for men and women', 'Let us conclude collective agreements and hold joint consultations', and 'Let us drive out vertical unions and build up a large-scale industrial union'.

In October 1946, the significant so called 'October struggle' was opened by Sanbetsu Kaigi. In the slogans there was a item:— 'Let us obtain unified collective agreements on the industrial level'. Also among the slogans adopted at the inaugural meeting of Sanbetsu Kaigi there was the item :— 'Equal pay for equal work'.

Sanbetsu Kaigi grew out of the development of intra-enterprise unions through federations of these unions into local councils and district councils of trade unions; Sōdōmei consisted of federations of intra-enterprise unions classified by industry or prefectural location. These conditions considered, it was an inevitable precondition for industrial unions to conclude unified collective agreements on the industrial level. Without them it would not be possible to achieve the industrial unification of workers. Under circumstances where trade unions were organized by the employees within an enterprise and that wages and other working conditions were concluded independently by each enterprise in post-war Japan, it was of the utmost importance to break the limit of intra-enterprise unions and to succeed in the agreement and standardization of working conditions by force of unified collective agreements on the industrial level. Doing so was by all means necessary to realise the true industrial unification of workers beyond the framework of the individual enterprise.

Unified collective agreements on the industrial level mean a change in the system of payment, and in individual wages in an enterprise. Without the change Japanese trade unions cannot establish themselves as autonomous unions. They cannot develop autonomously without the standardization of wages and other working conditions not bound by the framework of the enterprise. It can be said to have been a tragedy in the Japanese labour movement that the leaders of trade unions did not realize the truth. For the slogan that 'Equal pay for equal work', proposed by Sanbetsu Kaigi and Sōdōmei remained a mere slogan, and its true significance was not understood by them.

As a result of Sanbetsu Kaigi's October struggle in which it was an object to obtain unified collective agreements on the industrial level, the trade unions won the so-called 'Densan wage system', a wage system which the Council of Electric Power Industry Workers' Unions achieved, which was to guarantee the minimum living cost by age and which was quite different from the principle of 'Equal pay for equal work'. This came to be generally adopted later, by the trade unions belong-

ing to Sanbetsu Kaigi as the ideal doctrine for wage campaigns. The subordination of trade unions to management actually occurred in the most favourable conditions for the former, while the latter were politically and economically weakened.

## **II The Revival Process of the Seniority-Wage System and Trade Unions**

Backed up by the threat of cutting off the electricity and by the surprise enforcement of the Labour-Management Adjustment Law, the Council of Electric Power Industry Workers' Unions carried out a 54 day labour dispute demanding wage increases and came to an agreement on the 30th November 1946, which, almost completely achieved their demands. The so-called 'Densan wage system' was a seniority-wage system which was to guarantee the minimum standard of living and which was made up of the minimum wage by age group, family allowance, service-length allowance, and pay according to ability.

The Densan wage system which arose out of the demand to 'Pay us the minimum wage based on the cost of living', put a stress on the 'basic wage' together with an eight-hour working day and a women's periodic illness holiday. It was to slide with the fluctuation of prices, and the sum of payment was a net amount credited against income tax. For example, the basic wage was ¥500 for those who were less than 17 years old, ¥500 plus ¥30 per year for those between 18 and 30, and ¥20 per year additionally for those between 31 and 40 with no more additional pay for those older than 41; the family allowance was ¥200 for the first family member and ¥150 per head for the others; the service-length allowance was ¥10 per year; and the pay according to ability was ¥800 on the average.

The achievement of the Densan wage system was an epoch making event in two senses: first, the Council of Electric Power Industry Workers' Unions, breaking up the structure of payment completely controlled by the management, clarified for itself the standard of the respective wages of the workers; second, a unified collective agreement was concluded between the Council of Electric Power Industry Workers' Unions and the Japan Electric Power Generation and Transmission Company and the nine district electric power supply companies. But this wage system was against the fundamental principle that wages were to correspond to the quality and quantity of labour, as long as the wage system guaranteed the minimum standard of living *by age*. Though it contained pay according to ability which was to 'be based on a certain standard of assessment in respect to the technique, ability, experience, and knowledge of a worker', it only offered additional pay of less than ¥800 and the method of assessment was solely dependent on the management. In this sense pay according to ability was not part of the wages which corresponded to the quality of labour.

Originally the wage paid according to the quality of labour is not pay according to ability which is given in addition to the minimum cost of living by age groups, but it is the rate of payment set according to the quality and quantity of labour, not according to age, length of service, and experience. Elements such as age, length of service, experience, and educational background are appraised only in so far as they are connected with the quality of labour.

The Densan wage system was nothing but a rearranged seniority-wage system, a capitalistic system of wages<sup>1)</sup>. It was possible for capitalists to reestablish it as the seniority-wage system in their own favour, if only they could succeed in controlling the assessment of labour and in forming intra-enterprise agreements instead of unified collective agreements. In fact, capitalist succeeded in changing the Densan wage system into the seniority-wage system favoured by them. They made use of pay according to ability and assessment of labour by managers. Thus, they re-established the seniority-wage system so as to serve themselves. That the relative ratio of pay according to ability to subsistence pay in the wage system increased meant for management an increase of their own power of speaking, as shown by the table<sup>2)</sup> below:

Table of the Ratios of Pay according to Ability to Subsistence Pay

Year	Subsistence Pay	Pay according to Ability
Sept. 1947	73.5%	26.5%
1948	73.5	26.5
1949	74.6	25.3
1950	74.1	25.9
1951	70.7	29.3
1952	64.2	35.8
1953	59.3	40.7
1954	60.7	39.3
1955	60.9	39.1

In the case of the Tōkyō Electric Power Supply Company, the wage system was replaced in 1955 by one based on position and ability. This system included the following principles: 1) The basic wage is to be fixed in accordance with the appraised quality of labour and the total evaluation of a workers merits; 2) The basic wage is to be adjusted in April, every year; 3) The minimum wage is to be set in

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- 1) The Council of Electric Industry Workers' Unions substantiates this in its statement that "the new Densan wage system is nothing but a revival of the essential rule of wages in an old-fashioned way, which is derived from the analysis of past wage systems".
  - 2) T. Yoshimura, *Wage Campaigns in Japan*, pp. 37-38.



accordance with the age and length of service of a worker and to be paid in case the basic wage is lower than the minimum wage.

Densan (the Japan Electric Power Industry Workers' Union) was the most powerful industrial union of those belonging to Sanbetsu Kaigi. But it began to break down in October 1949, just before the promulgation of the Ordinance for Reorganizing the Electric Power Industry, when approximately half of the members of the Kantō district headquarters withdrew from the union in opposition to its 'too radical campaign', and organized an independent union named the Kāntō Electric Power Supply Workers' Union in December 1949. In the Densan dispute which took place in the autumn of 1952, the management straightforwardly rejected the principle of 'Equal pay for equal work' insisting the principle of 'Individual bargaining and payment on the enterprise level'. Thus, Densan was faced with the growing danger of breaking into intra-enterprise unions. In consequence of the continual withdrawal of members and the failure in the prolonged 86 day dispute, the dissolution of Densan became decisive. In early 1953 workers' secessions from Densan became more frequent, and the movement of Densan towards intra-enterprise unions increased. Finally Densan actually dissolved in July, when a preparatory meeting was held in order to form a national federation of electric power industry workers' unions. In this way Denrōren (the National Federation of Electric Power Industry Workers' Unions) was formed in May 1954, which was a federation of intra-enterprise unions in the electric power industry.

Densan, which had had an exceptional success in the conclusion of a unified collective agreement, took pride in its strong influence as a single industrial union. In fact, however, "it was nothing but the nation-wide federation of intra-enterprise unions of the Japan Electric Power Generation and Transmission Company Workers' Union on the one hand and the trade unions of the nine district electric power supply compaines on the other, whose weakness was covered by the strong centralization of power. For this reason Densan was obliged to hold consultations with the member unions in regard to the ordinary management of the institution, though in the case of struggles for wage increases and conclusion of agreements it made the best use of its centralized power."<sup>3)</sup> "Even though it appeared to be a single industrial union, Densan was actually a federation of intra-enterprise unions in character."<sup>4)</sup>

It is an essential duty for an industrial union autonomously to set a rate of payment corresponding to the quality and quantity of labour by an industrially unified collective agreement. But Densan caused itself to break up and change wrongly into intra-enterprise unions because it acquired the wage system by age groups which guaranteed the minimum cost of living of the workers.

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3) A Research on the Actual Conditions of Labour Disputes in Post-War Japan, *The Dispute of Densan*, pp. 50-51.

4) *Ibid.*, p. 48.

In such promising situations when wages were to some extent standardized though the Japanese living standard was low, and when labour's power had overwhelmed management, the Japanese trade unions missed a very rare chance of realizing the slogan of 'Equal pay for equal work'. On account of the labour-management relations based on seniority which survived from pre-war days, Japanese workers had intense enterprise-consciousness, so that they were ignorant of the necessity of autonomously setting wages and other working conditions, which was the core of the functions of trade unions. Many leaders of Sanbetsu Kaigi and the leftwing unions, especially communists, *were certain* that industrial unions should be the fundamental organizations for the contemporary labour movement, also having in mind an idea of unified collective agreement. On the contrary, the officials of Densan did not understand the significance of industrially regulating and standardizing wages and other working conditions by force of industrial unions. Neither did many scholars.

Before the enforcement of the Densan wage system, the U.S. Labour Advisory Committee had already criticized the Japanese wage system and given advice to the Japanese government and private enterprise as follows:

We, the members of the U.S. Labour Advisory Committee, believe that the present system of wages based on age, sex, and marital status is economically unsound, unequal to employees, and helpful in promoting employment customs which should be expelled in the future. As the present system is, in setting the wage of an employee, based on his individual circumstances and not on the degree of his contribution to the enterprise, it can be said to be uneconomic from the viewpoint of production cost. And if a worker is paid a high wage simply because he is aged in spite of the simple skill of and the light responsibility for his labour, such a system as would admit this is unequal.

Furthermore, the present system is likely to promote the employment of children in consequence of great differences in wages between the aged worker and the younger. In the same manner a married job-seeker is disadvantageous in competition with a single job-applicant, in case an employee's marital status is taken into account in setting the wage. There is no room for defending the system by whose regulation a female worker is paid a lower wage than a male worker even if she works as well as or even better than he.

For these reasons we advise the Japanese government and private enterprises to make an effort to establish a sound system of wages based on the assessment of a worker's ability, that is, a system of wages and salaries based not on an employee's personal conditions such as age, sex, and marital status, but on the duty and responsibility necessary to his labour.

In spite of the radical transformation of Japanese society caused by defeat in the war and the great prosperity of the labour movement, the wage system based on seniority still held good, which was set in consideration of workers' age, length of service and family. This was a wage system, as pointed out by the U.S. Labour Advisory Committee, which had no room for being defened in regard to its raison

d'être, for it helped promote some employment customs which should be expelled in the future.

Densan of its own accord enforced an indefensible, unfair wage system based on seniority, a system by age groups which guaranteed the minimum cost of living of the workers. The Japanese trade unions at that time failed to understand the significance not only of the advice given by the U.S. Labour Advisory Committee but also of the report made by the Inspection Party of the World Federation of Trade Unions in Japan (investigation carried out from the 24th March till the 7th April, 1947; Report issued in July, the same year). The report of the W.F.T.U. Inspection Party reads:

The wage regulations in industries including government enterprises are not based on the workers' ability for business, nature of work, and quality and quantity of labour done. Some regulations set wages according to a worker's age and length of service. We could not find basic wage for both male and female workers...

Such a system of wages is open to the misuse and discriminative treatment of employers at their disposal. Apart from the fact that it is irrational and uneconomic in itself. Wages must be founded on the qualification of a worker and his ability for work. The basic part of wages should be separated from additional allowances for family and aged relatives, and be equal to the entire body of employees irrespective of age or qualification...

Thus, straightforwardly, criticizing the Japanese wage system, the W.F.T.U. Inspection Party suggested in its report that the principle of 'Equal pay for equal work', should be brought into being through a unified collective agreement, and stated that "collective agreements must be universalized in order to revise this system; and it is necessary for both labour and management to discuss it and draw a conclusion."

Japanese trade unions overlooking the advice of the U.S. Labour Advisory Committee and the report of the W.F.T.U. Inspection Party owing to their ignorance of the functions of trade unions and the principle of wages, management came to misuse the wage system at their disposal and unjustly discriminated against workers. In order to solve this problem there was no other way than that of following the suggestion of the W.F.T.U. Inspection Party. Unfortunately, however, most of the leaders of Japanese trade unions have not yet understood this, as will be explained later. Here lay the greatest and most fatal weakness of the Japanese unions.

The October campaign, which was taken part in by large trade unions in private enterprises under the leadership of Sanbetsu Kaigi and which brought forth the Densan wage system, became very intense as a result of the joint struggle with the Japan Council of National and Public Government Workers' Unions. The campaign joined in the opposition party's movement to overthrow the cabinet; finally it developed into the February the First General Strike (the 1st February 1947) planned with slogans such as 'Let us start production again and set up a people's government'.

Though this general strike was stopped by order of General MacArthur, Supreme commander of the occupation forces, the working class elected the Socialist Party as the leading party in the general election of April 1947. As a result the Katayama Coalition Cabinet was founded. This cabinet helped oligopolistic capital grow rapidly by setting a wage base of ¥1,800 per month, thus sacrificing the working class. The Katayama Cabinet proclaimed a 'new system of prices' in July 1947. At the same time the cabinet fixed average wages of ¥1,800 for manufacturing industry, ¥2,441 for the shipbuilding industry and ¥1,124 for the silk manufacturing industry, between which average wages for 3,215 categories of industry were fixed. This policy was intended to stabilize both prices and wages in the following way: the prices of essential commodities were to be set 65 times as high as those in 1935, and the standard of wages, a constituent of prices, was to be set 26 times as high as that in 1935; in case the cost prices of essential commodities exceeded the set prices, the government was to pay price subsidies to the suppliers to stop the price rising above the standard.

Apparently this measure was employed for the purpose of stopping wages from rising above such a low standard. For under radical inflation and an excessive issue of inconvertible notes, rapid price rises of essential commodities were unavoidable, and yet wages were fixed at a level only 26 times as high as pre-war days, though the upper part of the prices of essential commodities more than 65 times as high were made up for by the payment of price subsidies to the suppliers. It was quite natural that the ¥1,800 wage base was at once rejected by the trade unions but it was supported by Sōdōmei which backed up the Coalition Cabinet of Socialist Prime Minister Katayama.

In spite of the fact that production remarkably decreased in post-war Japan (the rate of production was less than 20% compared to that of pre-war days), the excessive issue of inconvertible notes continued and substantial wages were greatly lowered.

The tables (p. 11) show the excessive issues of Bank of Japan Notes and the indices of nominal and substantial wages respectively.

The wage base of ¥1,800 not merely meant a horrible low-wage policy, fixing wages only 26 times as high as in 1935, whereas the prices of manufactured commodities were fixed 65 times as high and those of agricultural goods 47 times as high respectively, but also involved a serious problem in respect of its nature as the average wage over a large number of different categories of industry. The average wage is the average sum of pay per capita which is the quotient of the sum total divided by the number of employees. This is a basis for management to calculate personnel expenses, but not the wages of respective workers. Consequently in any way of paying wages to workers, management have complete control over the right to distribute the sum total. In distribution, management distinguish employees by education, type of employment (normal employment of new graduates, intermediate,

Issues of Bank of Japan Notes

Date	Issued Sum
1945, Aug. 15 (When Japan was defeated in World War II)	30,200 million yen
Dec. 31	55,400
1946, Jan. 31	58,500
Sept. 30	64,400
Oct. 31	70,500
Dec. 31	93,300
1947, Jan. 31	100,000
Feb. 28	105,400
Mar. 31	115,700

Nominal Wages and Indices of Substantial Wages in Manufacturing Industry (Monthly)

Date	Nominal Wages	Index of Substantial Wages
1943-1936	50.6 yen (Average Sum)	100.0
1946, Aug.	532.0	18.8
Sept.	584.0	22.5
Oct.	596.0	26.5
Nov.	688.0	28.8
Dec.	970.0	34.8
1947, Jan.	833.0	27.0
Feb.	879.0	28.5
Mar.	932.0	27.6

(Source: *Annual Report of Labour Statistics and Investigation*, 1949.)

regular or temporary employment and so on), length of service, age and sex, in addition to the evaluation of a worker's merits and the assessment of his efficiency<sup>5)</sup>.

- 5) The idea of an average wage was conceived not only by capital but also by labour. In the 2nd September 1946, the Hokkaido branch of the National Council of Coal Miners' Unions claimed to the League of Coal Mine Industry in Hokkaido "as the minimum sum the average wages of ¥50 a day for an underground worker and ¥35 for a surface worker and a guard to be put in force from the 1st September, provided that the basic wage be made 60% and the other allowances 40% excluding the legal family allowance of ¥20". The National Council of Coal Miners' Unions claimed on the 27th January to the Japan League of Coal Mine Industry average monthly pay of ¥1,455 for a surface worker and ¥1,955 for an underground worker, suggesting the 'establishment of a minimum-wage system based on the cost of living', an idea strongly influenced by the Densan wage system. These two sums were considered the monthly minimum living cost for surface and

Even in an exceptional case when the right to fix wages was used by trade unions as in the case of the Densan wage system, such wage system were mutilated or counterattacked by management. They were changed into seniority-wage systems, intra-enterprise wage systems with no unified rate of wages, because of the management's rejection of industrially unified bargaining and the individual unions' complete freedom from the regulation of industrial unions. Such a change in wage systems was further promoted by the 'pay for the job' system of ¥2,920 base for government and public workers, which was proposed in March 1948. The new wage base was also to direct the wage level of workers in private factories and offices. Though directors and managers of both public and private enterprises were ignorant and incapable of the analysis and assessment of job positions, such situations somewhat indicated their intention of opposing the wage system by which wages increased steadily in accordance with age and length of service owing to the influence of the trade unions. Taking advantage of this opportunity, large enterprises began to study the 'pay for the job' system. The 'pay for the job' system of ¥2,290 base did not take the place of the seniority-wage system; but it was at least intended to replace the principle of distributing wages according to seniority by management's arbitrary analysis and assessment of the job. In other words, management intended to introduce a wage system advantageous to themselves by which they could control the sum allotted for wages by means of the average wage, and the distribution by means of the pay for the job so as to stop the increase of the sum total. The pay for the job system was also a means for management to recover their lost power over wage administration which had been retarded by the active labour movement in post-war Japan. The basic wage policy of management today (1960's) can be found in the pay for the job policy based on seniority. And it has steadily been brought into effect in large enterprises despite the active counterstruggles of the trade unions.

As stated above, the Densan wage system was actually the first step, the average wage of ¥1,800 base the second, and the wage of ¥2,920 the third towards the wage system based on seniority. When these—the actual breakdown of Sanbetsu Kaigi (1950) and the strengthening of intra-enterprise unions closely connected with management's wage policy in its own favour—were combined with seniority wages, a wage system based on seniority could be said to have been reestablished. The formation of Sōhyō (the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan) was symptomatic. Wage struggles were aimed at a raise in the wage base since the

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underground workers, respectively, aged thirty and having a small family. There was a difficulty in collective bargaining, which was broken off once. The formal agreement concluded on the 12th April 1947 was an average wage agreement proposed by the League, to which the Council agreed on the assumption that the monthly pay of ¥1,445 could at least be secured. The Council's idea of average wages was, like the ones under the Densan wage system, naturally to be developed into the minimum-wage system distinguished by age group and family structure.

enforcement of the average wage system, though the initiative was taken by management. Until today most wage struggles have been along this line. In the days we have discussed there were very few, in academic circles, the press, or even trade unions themselves, who correctly understood the important function of the trade union—the autonomous enforcement of minimum rates of wages (by collective agreements) based on quality and quantity of labour<sup>6)</sup>.

### III The Establishment of Intra-Enterprise Unions and the Formation of Sōhyō

#### —The Breakdown of Sanbetsu Kaigi—

Now I will discuss the establishment of intra-enterprise unions and the enforcement of the wage system based on seniority—the establishment of Japanese labour-management relations—taking up firstly the breakdown of Sanbetsu Kaigi (the Congress of Industrial Unions of Japan) and secondly the formation of Sōhyō (the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan). As discussed above, the labour movement in post-war Japan, which had again begun with the aim of organizing Sōdōmei (the Japan Federation of Trade Unions), actually split in late 1945; its place was taken by the movement for the congress of factory representatives, under the guidance of the communists, and its principle was based on red unionism; then, out of the body of Kantō Rōkyō (the Kantō Council of Trade Unions) Sanbetsu Kaigi arose in August 1946, which composed the main current in the labour movement in post-war Japan. In this process, an anti-communist movement was formed and developed, and Sanbetsu Kaigi broke down and Sōhyō was established.

One of the characteristics of the labour movement right after the end of the war was that many labour disputes occurred; and the trade unions often used the tactic of managing production by themselves. The movement “took a radical measure, being apt to cause more or less violent incidents”<sup>7)</sup>. Such production management formed the basis of the labour disputes led by the Communist Party, which advocated ‘the rehabilitation of production by the people’ and ‘the nationalization of essential industries and management by the people’. It “became influential as a predominant tactic in labour disputes.”<sup>8)</sup> But this movement was stopped for a time in the middle of 1946 because of the difficulties of finance, procurement of raw materials, and sale of products, in addition to severe suppression by the government. Needless to say, such a tendency in the movement gave rise to antagonism against the communists.

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6) See Eitaro Kishimoto, *A History of Wage Theories in Japan*, Chapter II.

7) Matsuta Hosoya, *The Trade Union Movement in Japan*, p. 74.

8) *Ibid.*, p. 75.

From August till September 1946, just after its establishment, Sanbetsu Kaigi, by taking part in the large dispute of the Japan Seamen's Union and the National Railway Workers' Union which opposed mass discharges, succeeded in making the authorities completely withdraw the discharge program. Increased employment in wartime had caused a great number of supernumeraries to be employed in both public and private enterprises that had then either been destroyed or reduced to a great extent. Reviving capital and the Yoshida Cabinet adopted a hasty policy for consolidating enterprises and attempted to solve this problem at a stroke. They gave discharge notices to 60,000 seamen and 75,000 workers on the Japanese National Railways. The Japan Seamen's Union and the National Railway Workers' Union, with the support of Sanbetsu Kaigi, overcame internal confrontation; then they established the leadership of the leftwing faction, and finally gained the complete withdrawal of the discharge notices. This success, however, deepened the confrontation between the group which rejected discharges and the one which, admitting the inevitability of the discharges, advocated a policy of decreasing the number of workers to be dismissed. As a result of this confrontation there was a strong reaction against the leftwing faction which was connected with Sanbetsu Kaigi and the Communist Party.

Following the great dispute of the Japan Seamen's Union and the National Railway Workers' Union, Sanbetsu Kaigi opened a large-scale struggle in October with 552,000 participant mainly from large unions in private enterprises. In December Sanbetsu Kaigi combined with the Japan Council of National and Local Government Workers' Unions to advance towards the February the First General Strike scheduled for the 1st February 1947. It set the goal at 'overthrowing the Yoshida Cabinet and establishing a democratic people's government'. In this struggle a united front of the Socialist Party and the Communist Party came into being for the first time, and the joint struggle of Sanbetsu Kaigi and Sōdōmei made progress. It was because "though the Socialist Party and Sōdōmei were to some extent critical of the Communist Party and Sanbetsu Kaigi in respect to their leadership and actions, they could not help but support the demands of the working masses who made a strenuous effort to succeed in the February the First General Strike."<sup>9)</sup>

The plan of the February First General Strike was, however, stopped by General MacArthur on the 31st January 1947. Since then, feelings and criticism became rapidly intensified against the Communist Party and Sanbetsu Kaigi. The demand for self-criticism became widely prevalent among workers. Thus, "every organization was more or less faced with the necessity of reforming the constitution." In the N.R.W.U. rally held in March 1947, a motion was proposed that no union official should be a member of the Communist Party. In the June rally of the same union the rightwing faction succeeded in controlling the executive. Withdrawals of wor-

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9) *Ibid.*, p. 99.



kers continued from leading unions belonging to Sanbetsu Kaigi, such as the All Communications Employees' Union, the All-Japan Press Workers' Union, the All-Japan Machine & Instrument Industry Workers' Union, the General Federation of Printing and Publishing Workers' Unions, and the All-Japan Electric Industry Workers' Union. Thus, these unions continued to fluctuate.

In consequence of such fluctuations inside these trade unions, Sanbetsu Kaigi conducted some self-criticism. In May 1947 the managing board of Sanbetsu Kaigi announced the following official self-criticism: 1) Sanbetsu Kaigi had a tendency to drive every struggle into a strike. We should have carried out a more flexible ordinary campaign; 2) we gave the working masses the impression of being under the direct guidance of the Communist Party; 3) our movement was not conducted in a democratic way.

The self-criticism of the managing board was at once brought into the executive committee, which made it public with a new policy<sup>10)</sup>. Concerning this, the executive of Sanbetsu Kaigi opposed the Communist Party. In the convention for self-criticism held by Sanbetsu Kaigi on the 10th July 1947 "many self-critical statements were expressed, such as 'the February the First General Strike went too far', 'the communist faction is dictatorial' or 'the communist Dietmen decreased from 6 to 3, despite the support of Sanbetsu Kaigi which is said to have 1,800,000 members'.

"The rally, however ended in the rejection of the already proclaimed self-criticism and in the "affirmation of a resolution that there was no error in past guidance."<sup>11)</sup> Thus, "after the convention most communist members of the executive committee of Sanbetsu Kaigi obeyed the directions of the Communist Party, but many communist clerks in the executive office strongly resisted the opinions of and measures from the head office of the Communist Party. This resistance developed into a serious antagonism among the higher organs of Sanbetsu Kaigi."<sup>12)</sup>

The rejection of this self-criticism in the convention implied that the members' feelings and criticism—the demand for the democratization of unions—against the communist group in Sanbetsu Kaigi with the Communist Party behind it, which had been trying to force the working masses into frequent strikes and political struggles, were regarded as mere maneuvers of the anti-communist members; it also implied that the important significance of the 'self-criticism' has been completely overlooked.

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10) *A Short History of Sanbetsu Kaigi* rightly indicates this: It was owing to a great change of conditions that Sanbetsu Kaigi, which had been struggling ever since its establishment in August the previous year, was obliged to carry out self-criticism; at the same time it was owing to the workers' demand that Kaigi take a reasonable attitude as a trade union. There was a difficulty in that, though this had been made public in the criticism against the attitude of the leaders on the occasion of the October struggle and the February the First General Strike, it was ignored or rather suppressed. p. 48.

11) Minoru Takano, *The Labour Movement in Japan*, p. 71.

12) Matsuta Hosoya, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

In consequence of this convention Sanbetsu Kaigi was dissolved as a result of the frustration of local struggles for paralyzing local authorities which were directed by the communist group, and of the further development of the anti-communist movement for democratization.

The trade unions, which were inactive for a while after the prohibition of the February the First Strike, could hardly endure hunger and the low-wage policy of the Katayama Cabinet (the wage base was ¥1,800). Thus a demand arose among them for a fund for overcoming famine in July 1947. This was followed by a series of struggles for higher wages, and the unions "apparently took the offensive in June and, driving the workers to a large-scale struggle in the autumn, brought about a campaign in March the next year."<sup>13)</sup> "On the 11th September the union of Ikegai Tekko Company got a wage base of ¥4,600 (including tax), which was far higher than that of ¥1,800 fixed by the Katayama Cabinet a few months before; successively the unions of Tōkyō Kikai Company and Tsukijima Kikai Company got a wage base as high as the union of Ikegai Tekko Company had done."<sup>14)</sup>

Aiming at breaking through the wage base of ¥1,800, the Japan Council of National and Local Government Workers' Unions—the All Japan Post-office Telephone-Telegram Workers' Union, the National Railway Workers' Union, and others—also opened a struggle for higher wages. In the rally held at Matsue from the 11th till 14th of June 1947, the A.J.P.T.T.W.U. adopted such resolutions as 'Let us enforce the minimum-wage system based on stabilized prices', 'Distribute the necessities of life at reasonable prices', and 'Let us establish a local system of subsistence wages'. In July the A.J.P.T.T.W.U. demanded that the government accept the resolutions, by force of 'local strikes'. This was a political struggle for establishing popular control over local and official authorities by continuously opposing them, which was, instead of the prohibited February the First General Strike, introduced by Sanbetsu Kaigi with the Communist Party behind it. A record of Sanbetsu Kaigi reads:

The immediate opportunity for such a struggle to become prevalent was the prohibition of the February the First General Strike. This oppression, which was brought upon the nation-wide struggle of a general strike, bore hard upon the power which had united all kinds of unions rather than the way of the struggle. To stand against such an oppressive measure the above-mentioned *local political struggle* was brought into being. The foundation of such a local struggle was considered to be the workshop strife, which was to stand against the chief of a workshop and overcome him by the force of the union. Furthermore, it was prescribed to evolve into a local political struggle. Sanbetsu Kaigi and the industrial unions were regarded as the organizations to unite and direct workshop strifes and local struggles autonomously, though they were merely steps and stages in a large-scale political struggle and could be said from an objective point of view to be

13) *A Short History of Sanbetsu Kaigi*, p. 52.

14) *Ibid.*, p. 53.

in union with it. Such an organization had to spread rapidly<sup>15)</sup>.

The All-Japan Post-office and Telephone-Telegram Workers' and other public workers' unions had carried on a vehement struggle since August in demand for a living subsidy and succeeded in making the Central Labour Relations Commission authorize the payment of a 2.8 month living subsidy in November. Thus, they obtained the sum of two month's wages before the end of the year. But in the government opposing opinions arose as to whether fares and postal charges should be raised or not, in order to provide the source of the remaining 0.8 of a month's sum for the living subsidy. This resulted in the general resignation of the Katayama Cabinet on the 10th February 1948. In the course of this struggle (which lasted from August till September), a large number of workers at post offices and on the Japanese National Railways simultaneously absented themselves from their offices and workshops. It was a "spontaneous action of those workers in one sense, but also something of an autonomous campaign in their offices."<sup>16)</sup> It could be said to be to some extent the putting into practice of the local struggle. The government and Sōdōmei bitterly criticized it as a 'wildcat strike'.

Out of such intense struggles between the government and the public workers' unions developed a democratizing movement against factional activities. *A Short History of Sanbetsu Kaigi* writes:

Instigated by the anti-communist movement led by the Occupation Authorities, there grew a movement out of these [the intense struggles of the government and public workers' unions] which was aimed at securing the hegemony of the union movement, and it became more and more active. The central committee of Sōdōmei opposed the strengthening of Zenroren (the National Liaison Council of Trade Unions) established just after the prohibition of the February the First General Strike; it advocated the establishment of a democratizing league of trade unions on the 13th January 1948. Also within Sanbetsu Kaigi some anti-communist groups began to grow—*Nittsukai* of the Japan Express Company Workers' Union, *Midorikai* of the Japan Electric Power Industry Workers' Union and *Minshuka-renmei* of the Japan Post-office and Telephone-Telegram Workers' Union. An anti-communist league was organized in the National Railway Workers' Union, too. In agreement with such a movement, splits in unions occurred one after another. The Japan Federation of Coal Miners' Unions broke up on the 12th October 1947; the general meeting of the National Railway Workers' Union was adjourned owing to the disagreement between the leftwing and rightwing factions on the 19th October 1947; the Radio Workers Union resolved to withdraw from Sanbetsu Kaigi on the 21st January 1948; the National League of Chemical Industry Workers' Unions seceded from the National Council of Chemical Industry Workers' Unions on the 23rd February 1948. The establishment of the Democratizing League in Sanbetsu Kaigi on the 13th February 1948 was symbolic of an adventurous attempt to unite these anti-communist movements with union movements. The

15) *Ibid.*, p. 57.

16) *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Democratizing League insisted on stopping the communist group from carrying on activities within Sanbetsu Kaigi and on democratizing the union movement. What was behind this insistence was the workers' desire for the autonomy of the trade union<sup>17)</sup>.

It was certain that such a democratizing movement was backed up by international anti-communist movements, the U.S. occupation forces, the Japanese government, and capital. But if one takes these movements for a mere plot attempted by anti-communists, one overlooks the essence of the situation. For apparently the frequent splits were derived from the repulsion felt by ordinary union members against the high-handed leadership of Red Unionists.

It discloses not only the short-sightedness of the view but also the evidence of the invalidity of political ideas that we regard it the democratizing movement] from only one aspect of the situations as an anti-communist movement, as some communists assert. A series of actions in the branch unions of the Japanese National Railway Union, the Japan Electric Power Industry Workers' Union, All-Japan Express Company Workers' Union, and All-Japan Press and Radio Workers' Union, seem to be regarded as an anti-communist movement collectively. This is an opinion which does not grasp the essence of the problem. As a matter of course anti-communist elements are included, and even some anti-communist slogans seem to be put up. But this is just a phenomenon in which some took advantage of the public movement and not the essence of the movements themselves. Even though there has risen a mood against the Communist Party in offices or unions, the working masses oppose neither the Communist Party nor communism generally and politically, but they reject the inconsiderate, irresponsible factional actions of the Communist Party. It is an insult to them to call them anti-communist simply because they have rejected the directions of the communist officials of Sanbetsu Kaigi<sup>18)</sup>.

The statement quoted above may well be considered a correct explanation.

The anti-communist movement in Europe, breaking up the World Federation of Trade Unions, brought into being the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. But the break up caused no further split in unions within separate units of organization such as nation-wide institutions, industrial unions, craft unions, or general organizations. On the contrary, the disagreement between the communist and the anti-communist factions brought about the breakup of federations of unions, industrial unions, and intra-enterprise unions in Japan. There was an essential difference between Europe and Japan in which an important problem was involved.

Sanbetsu Kaigi, which could not take the Democratizing League for anything but the product of a plot to split it attempted by anti-communists, joined and guided the March struggle in 1948—a local one—of the All-Japan Post-office and Telephone and Telegram Workers' Union (it is said that there was serious antagonism

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17) *Ibid.*, p. 61.

18) Matsuta Hosoya, *The Labour Movement at a Turning-Point*, p. 12.

between the communist and the democratizing factions); Sanbetsu Kaigi also conducted the successive struggles of the government and public workers' unions lasting until June. As a result, internal antagonism grew more and more serious, and the failure of the struggle caused the democratizing movement to make rapid progress.

In circumstances of still aggravated inflation and the consequent rise in prices, the newly established Ashida Cabinet decided to enforce a system of 'Pay for the job' with a ¥2,290 base according to the report of the Temporary Wage and Allowance Investigation Committee. On proclaiming the decision, the cabinet ordered the Japan Council of National and Local Government Workers' Unions to stop their strike actions in many offices. But with the exception of the National Railway Workers' Union the others opposed the nature of the new wage system and the way of payment, and warned the government to accept their counterdemands. In the meantime strong local struggles were carried on in many regional offices. "The All-Japan Post-office and Telephone-Telegram Workers' Union had already been carrying on intense actions in a large number of local post-offices, including the strike at Ōsaka Central Post-office on the 25th February 1948. The strikes, which lasted for from three to seventy-two hours, were carried out by many office, local, and district unions until the 19th March, on which the Japan Council of National and Local Government Workers' Unions gave the warning to the government. Thus, the branch unions that took part in this struggle totalled 904; the members amounted to 247,754. As for government workers' unions other than the All-Japan Post-office and Telephone-Telegram Workers' Union, the branch unions of the National Railway Workers' Union entered into struggles, and the National Finance Bureau Workers' Union used leave-of-absence tactics in concert with them on the 15th March. In addition, the Japan Teachers' Union, the All-Japan General Confederation of Local Autonomy Government Workers' Unions, the Japan Electric Power Industry Workers' Union, and the All-Japan Coal Miners' Union struggled in many regions<sup>19)</sup>.

As soon as the ¥2,920 wage base passed the Diet, the All-Japan Post-office and Telephone-Telegram Workers' Union proclaimed a strike on the 22nd March. It negotiated with the government, but the negotiations came to a rupture. In consequence, the All-Japan Post-office Telephone-Telegram Workers' Union "went on a twenty-four hour strike in three regions from March 25th till 27th under the guidance of headquarters. Furthermore, the union decided to open a series of strikes from the 29th in the Eastern and Western districts at first and then throughout the entire area of Japan. As for the National Railway Workers' Union, the branch unions of Hokkaido, Aomori, the home office, and Yokohama resolved the

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19) *A Short History of Sanbetsu Kaigi*, p. 63.

non-confidence of headquarters and a joint strife with the Japan Council of National and Local Government Workers' Unions. Thut, they showed a firm attitude by being ready to go on strike. In sympathy with the Japan Council of National and Local Government Workers' Union, the All-Japan Machine & Instrument Industry Workers' Union and the All-Japan Electric Industry Workers' Union determined to go on a twenty-four hour strike and raise a fund for it. The All-Japan Coal Miners' Union, which was carrying on local strikes, proposed that the All-Japan Post-office and Telephone-Telegram Workers' Union join the struggle."<sup>20)</sup> On this occasion the J.P.T.T.W.U. agreed to go on a nation-wide strike on the 31st March, but an admiral at G.H.Q. requested it be stopped because it came under the prohibition of the February the First General Strike. So the union was obliged to stop the nation-wide strike, but "it was changed into local strikes, so that the local councils in Tōkai, Hokuriku, Kinki, Chūgoku, Shikoku, and Kyūshū carried out strikes simultaneously in those districts. The occupation authorities also prohibited these local strikes on the 31st March 1948 because they were having a similar effect."<sup>21)</sup>

But this prohibition, however, failed to prevent the strikes completely. "The branch unions in Matsuyama, Miyagi, Ōsaka, and the International Department of the All-Japan Post-office and Telephone-Telegram Workers' Union, rejecting the prohibition, went on strike respectively from the 9th till 16th of April."<sup>22)</sup> In spite of such rejections, the prohibition greatly influenced many unions, and the Japan Council of National and Local Government Workers' Unions reached an agreement with the government, accepting the new wage base.

This agreement, however, afforded no solution at all. For the aggravated inflation virtually cancelled out wages with a ¥2,920 base, so that the Japan Council of National and Local Government Workers' Unions, including the National Railway Workers' Union which had at the very first accepted the ¥2,920 wage base, claimed on the 12th June wages with a ¥5,200 base in opposition to the rise of ¥3,791 proposed by the government, together with other demands such as 'opposition to the revision of prices' and 'opposition to the additional imposition of mass taxes, and the establishment of a grievance committee'. Struggles began to "develop into popular district struggles, spreading on a nation-wide scale."<sup>23)</sup> The All-Japan Post-office and Telephone-Telegram Workers' Union "decided to run a large popular struggle in cooperation with farmers and other ordinary people; the National Railway Workers' Union transferred the right to strike to the central committee, reiterating local strikes. The conference of the central committee of the A.J.P.T.T.W.U. held at Kanazawa adopted a local-struggle policy as to 'how the present struggles

20) *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

21) *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

22) *Ibid.*, p. 65.

23) Minoru Takano, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

should be carried out'.<sup>24)</sup>

Under such circumstances General MacArthur sent a letter to Prime Minister Ashida on the 22nd July, suggesting the idea of amending the Public Service Law completely and of adopting the institution of public corporations. In response to General MacArthur's suggestion, the Ashida Cabinet promulgated Cabinet Order No. 201 on the 31st July, restricting the rights to strike and collective bargaining. Opposing the action of the government, the National Railway Workers' Union and the A.J.P.T.T.W.U. declared a state of emergency. The Hokkaido Shintoku branch union of the N.R.W.U. and other unions collectively deserted their jobs. Similar collective desertions and absences of workers from workshops occurred in the A.J.P.T.T.W.U. They made appeals for the defence of the Constitution of Japan, national independence, and anti-fascism. It is said that all the union members who deserted their jobs (amounting to more than one thousand) suffered administrative measures.

Cabinet Order No. 201 was a threat against the right of organization involving a crisis for democracy. For, first, by virtue of the revised National Public Service Law (December 1948) and the Public Corporation Labour Relations Law (December 1948) desk-working public servants were completely deprived of the rights to strike and collective bargaining, and operative public servants were also deprived of the right to strike though they were allowed to hold the right of collective bargaining; and secondly, the right to strike was the core of democracy. It should not, however, be overlooked that what had brought the MacArthur letter and Cabinet Order No. 201 was a violent struggle for power as shown in the case of the March and July struggles of the A.J.P.T.T.W.U. It had clearly been foreseen because of the prohibitions of the February the First General Strike and the March struggle that the struggles of public servants for political power might be suppressed. And "what was derived from the actions of these two great unions, which were excited by the MacArthur letter, declaring a state of emergency, and which carried out collective absence and desertion of workers from workshops, was only the development of the democratizing factions."<sup>25)</sup> Sanbetsu Kaigi itself admitted the fact, yet attributed the cause to the splitting policy of the anti-communist democratizing factions. Thus Sanbetsu Kaigi leaned further towards the struggle for political power:

The Democratizing League of Sanbetsu Kaigi held the first national convention on the 12th June 1948. Sōdōmei withdrew from Zenrōren (the Liaison Council of All Trade Unions of Japan) on the 28th June. The Democratizing League and Sōdōmei, in cooperation with each other, organized a democratizing league or a second union within main organizations of Sanbetsu Kaigi. These powers being gradually strengthened, the workers' struggle was faced with increased internal difficulties. Con-

24) *Ibid.*, p. 79.

25) Matsuta Hosoya, *The Trade Union Movement in Japan*, p. 113.

sequently a new problem was brought forth which was different from the pre-March-struggle days; the actions of Sanbetsu Kaigi came to be restricted little by little. It tried to spread the united front by virtue of political demands, adopting a policy more and more opposed to the democratizing factions and others.

Soon after the promulgation of Cabinet Order No. 201 the Preparatory Council of the Democracy Defence League started activities (the 27th August), with Sanbetsu Kaigi and Zenrōren as its central institutions. The preparatory council intended to make a democratic national front.

Under the circumstances as stated above, the fourth convention of Sanbetsu Kaigi was held from the 19th till 22nd of November 1948. In it was resolved a proposition that the Democratizing League should dissolve itself, so that fifty-two delegates of the faction left the meeting (the participants amounted to 500). The reason was said to be that their actions since February had been against the workers. The convention adopted slogans for the defending the worker's right to earn his living and industry because doing so was to defend democracy and national independence. As a method of struggle the 'graded struggle'<sup>26)</sup> was emphasized<sup>27)</sup>.

The resolution for the dissolution of the Democratizing League adopted at the fourth convention of Sanbetsu Kaigi failed to stop the democratizing movement; indeed it brought about the contrary effect of forming its national organization<sup>28)</sup>. The very cause for the growth of the democratizing movement was that Sanbetsu Kaigi had persistently been forcing workers into the struggle for power.

In 1949, inflation was reduced by force of the Dodge Policy; large-scale industrial adjustments and mass discharges were carried out. The communist and democratizing factions opposed each other, which resulted in the defeat of the for-

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26) The graded struggle adopted by the central committee of the All-Japan Post-office and Telephone-Telegram Workers' Union on the 1st September 1948 "is not a unified struggle, but a struggle policy to act according to the workers' power and self-consciousness; it is an invisible methodical campaign to be concentrated, not by formal instructions, but by the workers' intense fighting spirit". (*A Short History of Sanbetsu Kaigi*, p. 75.)

27) *A Short History of Sanbetsu Kaigi*, pp. 79-80.

28) In opposition to the resolution of *disorganization*, the Democratizing League announced: We cannot subject ourselves to the decision of the managing board. For there is no reason for prohibiting only our actions without removing other factions. Since we have thirteen out of nineteen members of the managing board and more than thirty out of forty-nine members of the executive committee belonging to the communist faction in Sanbetsu Kaigi today, we cannot discuss matters in a democratic way. Resigning our position as vice-chairman, secretaries, and clerks, we will carry out a struggle supported by the working masses for achieving the objects of the Democratizing League.

On the 24th February they had a round-table conference with over 200 participants from Sōdōmei, the National Railway Workers' Union, the Japan Federation of Coal Miners' Unions, the General Federation of Ship Building Workers' Unions, and the Japan General Federation of Private Railways Workers' Unions. They agreed to act in concert (*Report of July 26th edit.*, by the National Democratizing Council of Trade Unions). The Democratizing League of Sanbetsu Kaigi held, on the 12th and 13th of July 1948, the first national rally where they announced its classified membership as follows:



mer. Aggravated American-Soviet relations and the developing anti-communist policy of the U.S., together with the success of the Communist Revolution in China (lasting from December 1948 till October 1949), greatly heightened the position of Japan as an 'anti-communist base' in Asia, and changed U.S. diplomatic policy towards Japan to a large extent. The U.S. government, having laid emphasis on the demilitarization and democratization of Japan and having entrusted the rehabilitation of the economy to her autonomously in spite of American economic assistance, expected the early achievement of Japan's independence. Thus in December 1948 a U.S. government order was sent in the form of General MacArthur's letter to Prime minister Yoshida, in which nine principles for rehabilitation of Japan were indicated, for purposes of enforcing a single rate of exchange and ending the inflation in the shortest possible time. J.M. Dodge, the then President of the Bank of Detroit, was despatched to Japan to carry out the nine economic principles.

The inflation caused by the deficit financing and the financing by the Reconstruction Finance Bank rapidly came to an end in consequence of this measure. Then, the single exchange rate of one dollar to three hundred and sixty yen was established. Inflation was converted into deflation. On the occasion when industrial adjustment and mass discharges were being carried out, the autonomous rehabilitation of the Japanese economy made progress.

Union	Number of Democratizing Factions	Total Number of Members
A.J.P.T.T.W.U.	10,800	357,000
J.E.P.I.W.U.	49,000	114,000
A.J.E.C.W.U.	55,000	96,000
A.J.H.W.U.	17,000	27,000
A.J.E.I.W.U.	22,000	75,000
N.F.L.I.W.U.	7,000	14,000
A.J.M.I.I.W.U.	18,000	100,000
A.J.G.F.W.U.	4,000	30,000
J.C.I.W.U.	19,900	100,000
J.F.I.S.I.W.U.	3,000	
F.R.S.I.W.U.		
G.F.P.P.W.U.		

(Sanzo Kawasaki, *The Trends of Labour Movements in Post-War Japan*, p. 71.)

List of the Abbreviated Names of the Unions in the Table: A.J.P.T.T.W.U.—The All-Japan Post-office and Telephone-Telegram Workers' Union; J.E.P.I.W.U.—The Japan Electric Power Industry Workers' Union; A.J.E.C.W.U.—The All-Japan Express Company Workers' Union; A.J.H.W.U.—The All-Japan Harbour Workers' Union; A.J.E.I.W.U.—The All-Japan Electric Industry Workers' Union; N.F.L.I.W.U.—The National Federation of Life Insurance Workers' Union; A.J.M.I.I.W.U.—The All-Japan Machine & Instrument Industry Workers' Union; A.J.G.F.W.U.—The All-Japan Garrison Forces Workers' Union; J.C.I.W.U.—The Japan Chemical Industry Workers' Union; J.F.I.S.I.W.U.—The Japan Federation of Iron & Steel Industry Workers' Union; F.R.S.I.W.U.—The Federation of Rolling Stock Industry Workers' Union; G.F.P.P.W.U.—The General Federation of Printing & Publishing Workers' Union.

Consumers' Price Index &amp; Real Wage Index

Year	Consumers' Price Index (Average Prices from Jan. till Dec., 1948 in All Cities=100)	Real Wage Index in Manufacturing Industry (Average Real Wages from 1934 till 1936=100)
1948 Oct.	115.8	57.6
Nov.	120.6	59.0
Dec.	127.5	71.7
1949 Jan.	132.9	61.7
Feb.	135.5	59.9
Mar.	139.8	59.4
Apr.	141.3	59.4
May	142.8	56.3
June	137.8	60.7
July	140.7	62.8
Aug.	140.8	64.8
Sept.	140.2	64.2
Oct.	136.4	65.1
Nov.	131.8	68.3
Dec.	134.0	77.9
1950 Jan.	135.5	77.6
Feb.	129.8	75.0
Mar.	127.7	75.6
Apr.	124.3	79.9
May	126.3	78.3

(Source: Ministry of Labour, *Annual Report of Labour Statistics and Investigation in 1949, 1950.*)

Under cover of the deflation caused by the nine economic principles,<sup>29)</sup> the government and private enterprise carried out mass discharges which they could have hardly done on account of labour offensives. Besides, they purged the leftwing radicals from enterprises with the tacit approval of the democratizing factions. The purge implied that Japan's economic rehabilitation was being carried out in the way capital had wanted to have it done. In response, Sanbetsu Kaigi, regarding this measure as industrial destruction planned by monopolistic capital, opened an industrial defence struggle and organized an industrial defence council in every important industry.

At the same time local defence councils were set up. And in Yūbari, Gumma, and

29) A deflationary policy directed by the American banker Joseph M. Dodge. All the expenditure of the national and local government offices were to be paid out of taxes, and all deficit-covering bonds were prohibited. This was an application of the nine economic principles and was aimed at the establishment of a single exchange rate in the shortest possible time.

Adjusted Enterprises & Personnel Dismissed in Private Enterprise

Month	Number of Adjusted Enterprises	Number of Personnel Dismissed
1949 Feb.	218	7,480
Mar.	479	15,349
Apr.	513	26,299
May	833	31,911
June	941	40,840
July	1,241	99,629
Aug.	1,330	73,546
Sept.	1,071	44,264
Oct.	748	33,552
Nov.	645	32,468
Dec.	795	30,132
	8,814 (Total)	435,465 (Total)

(Source: Ministry of Labour, *Report of the Labour Market Survey Section.*)

many other districts struggles were carried out against local self-governing bodies under such slogans as 'Defend our home!' and 'Defend Industry!'. It was planned to raise a struggle against the Yoshida Cabinet by involving terminal authorities in it. Such were the tactics used by Sanbetsu Kaigi. The fifth extensive executive committee of Sanbetsu Kaigi held on the 23rd and 24th of June 1949 adopted a policy in respect to the industrial defence struggle as shown below:

1) By collecting workers' claims in the workshop strife, we are to start a mass movement, control workshops and offices autonomously, and manage them as the working masses wish.

2) We are to have the progressive national capital observe the claims of the workers and grapple with monopolistic capital's policy of centralized production.

3) By extending the industrial defence struggle into workshops and management, and connecting it with the basic and correlated industries, with farmers, and with other people, we are to have local self-governing bodies stand for the struggle to defend home industries.

4) By extending local strifes to a national struggle which is to be developed into a political struggle for overthrowing the Yoshida Cabinet, we are to have collective bargaining with the government and demand the opening of an extra session of the Diet<sup>30)</sup>.

The policy mentioned above was the same struggle policy as that of local struggles taken after the prohibition of the February the First General Strike. In addition, it was the cause of bringing the Democratizing League within Sanbestu Kaigi; it was nothing but the struggle policy which had completely been frustrated by the oppression of the authorities. It was natural, therefore, that such a struggle

30) *A Short History of Sanbetsu Kaigi*, p. 80.

policy was not backed up by the working masses. Because of it, on the contrary, Sanbetsu Kaigi was made to stand alone, and many industrial unions seceded from it. And to the inaugural meeting of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions held in London in November 1949 the National Railway Workers' Union, All-Japan Post-office and Telephone-Telegram Workers' Union, All-Japan Coal Miners' Union, and Japan Teachers' Union sent their representatives.

The Democratizing League of Sanbetsu Kaigi as well as Sōdōmei admitted the necessity of putting the nine economic principles into operation, struggling to solve the actual problems which would arise in process of their enforcement. In opposition to Sanbetsu Kaigi, Sōdōmei held on the 19th November 1949 a preparatory meeting for organizing a national congress of trade unions; the Democratizing League of Sanbetsu Kaigi formed Shinsanbetsu (the New National Federation of Industrial Organizations) on the 10th December 1949. In March 1950 a preparatory meeting for the formation of Sōhyō (the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan) was held; in July Sōhyō was organized, which has occupied the most prominent position in the labour movement of Japan until today. Sanbetsu Kaigi rapidly lost its influence on trade unions, thus actually ceasing to exist.

Now I would like to touch on the mass discharges in the National Railway Workers' Union and All Communications Employees' Union. They were carried out by force of the Public Corporation Labour Relations Law, which deprived the workers of the N.R.W.U. and A.J.P.T.T.W.U. of the right to strike. Enforcing the Personnel Strength Law on the 30th May, the government planned to discharge 420,365 officials belonging to administrative organs, including 120,413 workers of the N.R.W.U. The struggle against this plan arose on the occasion of the Tōkyō Railway Bureau of enforcing on the 1st June a new system of working conditions for guards, including a fifteen minute extension of working hours. On the 9th June the Guards' Station and Electric Train Station at Higashikanagawa went on strike and this strike spread to the Guards' Stations at Kamata and Nakano, and the the Electric Train Stations at Nakano, Mitaka, and Shimojūjō. Consequently the operation of electric trains was stopped for three days on the main lines around Tōkyō. The authorities subjected nineteen leaders of this struggle to disciplinary dismissal, also accusing them before the Public Procurators Office. As soon as this disciplinary measure was announced, the Guards' Stations at Higashikanagawa and other places went on strike one after another, and strife extended over all Tōkyō districts. Furthermore, a council of representatives of factories was held in Kanagawa. Jointly conducted by the members of the council of representatives of factories and the workers of the N.R.W.U., 'people's electric trains' ran along the Yokohama Line and Keihin Tōhoku Line. They amounted to more than ten services<sup>31)</sup>.

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31) *Ibid.*, p. 90.

The 'people's electric trians' were prohibited by the occupation forces. The National Railway Workers' Union, holding the fifteenth central committee from the 23rd till 25th of June in preparation for administrative readjustment, decided to take action including strikes if the worst came to the worst. On the 4th July the authorities of the Japanese National Railways gave the first dismissal notices to 30,700 workers.

On the next day both the N.R.W.U. and A.J.P.T.T.W.U. declared a joint defence struggle, entering into action<sup>32)</sup>. A little later there occurred the so-called 'Shimoyama Incident' in which Mr. Shimoyama, the then President of the Japanese National Railways, was murdered, being found as if he had committed suicide by throwing himself under a train. Because of this incident the struggle seemed to become dispirited. Under such circumstances the second batch of notices of dismissal was given to 63,000 workers on the 13th July. Thus the struggle reached a serious stage<sup>33)</sup>, when the so-called 'Mitaka Accident' occurred on the 15th. This was a case in which an electric train with no motorman ran for some reason into Mitaka Station on the Chūō Line. On the 18th the authorities dismissed twelve communists of the leftwing faction in the central struggle committee of the N.R.W.U. and five members of Kakushin Dōshikai (the Reformist Group), an intermediate faction between the communist and democratizing factions<sup>34)</sup>. The struggle was frustrated; the democratizing faction controlled the central struggle committee, and holding the seventh extraordinary convention from the 10th till 13th of October, succeeded in completely controlling the National Railway Workers' Union.

On the 12th August there was a mass discharge of workers of the All-Japan Post-office and Telephone-Telegram Workers' Union, to which 26,500 workers including twenty-six members of the central struggle committee were subjected. In the ninth central committee held in Kamisuwa from the 12th till 14th of September there was a heated debate concerning the term, 'anti-working', used about Saiken Dōmei (the Reconstruction League), one of the democratizing factions. Central committeeman Takaragi, the then Head Official of the Reconstruction League and the present chairman of the All-Japan Post-office and Telephone-Telegram Workers' Union, insisted that "a union movement that carries on such illegal struggles that victims are inevitably increased is in itself against the workers... we now have to part from the Communist Party." Thus, the members of the Reconstruction League left the committee, and the union broke up. "As soon as the All-Japan Post-office and Telephone-Telegram Workers' Union was split, the masses dispersed. The split in the A.J.P.T.T.W.U. resulted in the complete breakdown of the Or-

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32) *Ibid.*, p. 90.

33) *Ibid.*, p. 91.

34) The central struggle committee consisted of nineteen members of the communist faction, nine of the reform faction, and fourteen of the democratizing faction.

ganization."<sup>35)</sup>

About the time of the mass discharges in the N.R.W.U. and A.J.P.T.T.W.U., similar dismissals were being announced in one large union after another in private industry. As a result of these mass dismissals, workers were beginning to make a stand against management. The anti-dismissal struggle of the Tōshiba Electric Company Workers' Union was the core of these. "The local-joint-strife organizations which consisted mainly of the N.R.W.U. and Tōshiba Electric Company Workers' Union were set up at the places where Tōshiba factories were located. The A.J.P.T.T.W.U., other government and public workers' unions, and the trade unions of private industries were connected to one another around the local-joint-strife organizations. The joint struggle of the National Railway and the Tōshiba Workers' Unions was generalized in the form of local people's struggles. And these unions were inclined to employ and raising campaigns in the street even when they repeated rather strong struggles; these struggles could not be concentrated into the single struggle of a single organization throughout the entire period of the struggle, so that these unions came to lose the functions of trade unions. Thus, these local people's struggles turned out, in many cases, to be manipulated by the local organs of the Communist Party."<sup>36)</sup>

The intense joint struggle of the Tōshiba, National Railways, and other unions, which was directed by the communists who advocated a September revolution, collapsed at a stroke owing to the Matsukawa Accident of 17th September (a case where a train was overturned near Matsukawa on the Tōhoku Line causing a few casualties).

The government announced that the train had been overturned by members of the Communist Party and suppressed the struggle. The three things— the Shimoyama Incident, Mitaka Accident, and Matsukawa Accident occurred coincidentally when the struggles were nearing their climax and owing to these incidents the mass discharges turned out well.

It is said that those who were dismissed in consequence of industrial readjustment and the closing and insolvency of enterprises amounted to one million. Delayed payment and non-payment of wages covered the entire industry. In this way intense antagonism was brought into being between labour and management. The Communist Party and Sanbetsu Kaigi were always faithful to their guiding principle of the struggle for revolutionary power, which gave rise to the democratizing faction within the latter and led to its collapse.

The Japanese government, with the occupation forces behind it, took up a capitalistic way of reconstructing the Japanese economy, whereas Sanbetsu Kaigi, with the Communist Party behind, insisted on a proletarian method, as mentioned

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35) Ichiro Saito, *A History of the Labour Movement in Post-War Japan*, Part I, p. 271.

36) *Ibid.*, p. 270.

above. The antagonistic contention between the government and Sanbetsu Kaigi in regard to the economic rehabilitation of Japan ended in the complete victory of the former. For in the process of contention the latter brought forth the anti-communist power of the Democratizing League which was cooperative with the former and stood against the organization itself. Sanbetsu Kaigi and the Communist Party intensely opposed the capitalistic way of economic reconstruction, from a political point of view but failed to restrict it at all. It might well be said that the then communists neither understood nor tried to understand the union function of regulating wages, working conditions and employment. It was quite natural, too, that the communists who were straightforwardly advancing towards 'revolution' did not try to understand it within the framework of capitalism. Here lay a tragedy. For, in spite of the inevitable growth of the democratizing factions which 'cooperated' in, yet 'opposed' and 'struggled' against the capitalistic way of economic reconstruction of Japan then in progress, the communists merely regarded it as a machination of anti-communist seceders.

The process in which the democratizing factions prospered, whereas Sanbetsu Kaigi declined, was also the one by which industrial unions— they were nothing but industrial federations of intra-enterprise unions— and intra-enterprise unions continually broke up. It was also the process by which second unions came into being and increased their influence. Sōhyō was precisely a nation-wide, concentrated organization of such second unions. The separation of trade unions was made mainly on the pretext of opposition against radical leftist guidance. The following items are some of the examples of a large number of splits in unions in the history of the labour movement after World War II, especially after the prohibition of the February the First General Strike:<sup>37)</sup>

Ex. 1. The Imperial Oil Company Workers' Union (belonging to Sanbetsu Kaigi). In process of the struggle for collective agreement those who were dissatisfied with the dictatorial, demagogic attitude of their union officials separated from the union, and forming a second union on the 20th September 1946, took part in Sōdōmei. The management backed up the separated union positively. Later both unions were amalgamated; the amalgamated union established the National Council of Petroleum Industry Workers' Unions, in cooperation with the Japan Petroleum Company Workers' Union and others, to join Sanbetsu Kaigi. But the Imperial Oil Company Workers' Union again seceded from N.C.P.I.W.U. and Sanbetsu Kaigi on the 3rd January 1949.

Ex. 2. The Northeastern Metalworking Company Workers' Union (belonging to Sōdōmei). Owing to delayed payment and the difficulty of achieving the sliding-scale system of wages secessionists insisted on the opinion that 'they should make a union movement in consideration of the business conditions of the company, for the present union seems to have gone too far'. Thus, the secessionists formed a second union on the

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37) The Labour Administrative Research Institute, *The Conditions of the Present Labour Movement*, pp. 7-8. See also Wakao Fujita, *The Second Union*.

14th June 1948, which the management positively approved.

Ex. 3. Mitsubishi Mihara Rolling Stock Manufacturing Factory Workers' Union (belonging to the National Council of Rolling Stock Manufacturing Industry Workers' Unions and Sanbetsu Kaigi). Taking advantage of the anti-communist movement on a nation-wide scale, some members advocated driving out the communist faction and separated from the union to set up a second union (the 24th March 1948). But those who were dissatisfied with the leaders of the second union as making too much of the Socialist Party seceded once again from it to form a third union.

Ex. 4. The Kawasaki Heavy Industry Company Workers' Union (belonging to the Japan Federation of Iron & Steel Industry Workers' Unions and Sanbetsu Kaigi). Denouncing the dispute as ideological and political, those who were discontented withdrew from the union in succession in April 1948 and formed three unions.

Ex. 5. The Japan Radio Workers' Union (belonging to the Federation of Press & Radio Workers' Unions and Sanbetsu Kaigi). Some members criticized the 'struggle for struggle's sake', and separating from the union for want of autonomy, organized the Japan Federation of Radio Workers' Unions on the 2nd March 1948.

Ex. 6. The Asahi Newspaper Workers' Union (belonging to the Federation of Press & Radio Workers' Unions). Owing to the deadlocked struggle for the sliding-scale system of wages and collective agreement, and to the offensive of capital, the union split into six in October 1948.

Ex. 7. The Japan Typewriter Manufacturing Company Workers' Union (belonging to the All-Japan Federation of Machine & Instrument Industry Workers' Unions and Sanbetsu Kaigi). Those who opposed the struggle for managing production set up a second union on the 19th November 1948. Both unions brought about trouble between them concerning entering the factory.

Ex. 8. The Japan Instrument Manufacturing Company Workers' Union (belonging to the Japan Federation of Iron & Steel Industry Workers' Unions and Sanbetsu Kaigi). Those who regarded the struggles of J.F.I.S.I.W.U. as ideological and political and incapable of solving serious economic claims split into four unions in May 1948.

At the fifth convention of Sanbetsu Kaigi held from the 28th till 30th of November 1949, which was held while the organization was on the verge of collapse, the declaration adopted emphasized that "every worker should claim a workshop and wage worthy of his labour; and complete independence and peace derived from an over-all peace treaty should be achieved."<sup>38)</sup> As the policy of the struggle the following were also stressed:—"to open unified action with ordinary claims, to adopt as tactics the setting-up of a workshop committee, factory representative committee, and to purge secessionists from the labour front by force of the unified action of the working masses."<sup>39)</sup> But this struggle policy only helped increase the continual secessions. It may well be said that the tragic destiny of Sanbetsu Kaigi lay in that the leaders were unaware of such a situation in spite of many bitter experiences.

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38) *A Short History of Sanbetsu Kaigi*, p. 93.

39) *Ibid.*, p. 94.



Owing to the mass discharges in 1949, communists and many of their sympathizers had been pruned from enterprises. Again in 1950 almost 19,200 'fighting workers' were dismissed from every industry in the so-called Red Purge beginning in June, a little before the breakout of the Korean War, and ending in December. As a result most of the leftists lost their positions in their enterprises. Every organ of the trade unions was completely controlled by the democratizing faction. "The Red Purge was carried out by management and government in accordance with the orders of the occupation authorities..., more than two thousand personnels in the electric and coal mining industries respectively, and more than four thousand personnel in the iron and steel and chemical industries and the government organs respectively were the main victims."<sup>40)</sup>

Before the Red Purge, labour struggles which followed the year-end struggle of 1949 became active; these were concentrated in the March struggle. The "March struggle turned out to consist of strikes in large enterprises, spreading widely; it was supported by the working masses who helped the unions hold demonstrations in their workshops, hold workers' mutual interchanges of different workshops, and set up local joint-meetings of workers and joint-struggle councils."<sup>41)</sup> What was most noticeable in the development of the struggles was the one of the Federation of All Hitachi Manufacturing Company Workers' Unions which was called the 'last struggle to make or break Sanbetsu Kaigi'.<sup>42)</sup>

By submitting a wage demand for a ¥12,000 rise on the 4th April, the Federation of All Hitachi Manufacturing Company Workers' Unions went on strike in all the factories. But the management rejected the demand and instead proclaimed the adoption of a 'pay for the job' system and the dismissal of 5,555 personnels. The All-Japan Metal Industry Workers' Union fought with all its might, taking management's measure for the causes of low wages, intensification of labour, and war in the long run, in order to suppress secessionists' maneuvers, to realize autonomous management of factories, that is, of production, to accept a wide range of problems from workers, to prepare for the prolongation of the struggle, and to involve the families of workers in the struggle. Centering around the four factories of Hitachi in Ibaraki district, a large-scale meeting in which the workers' families also took part, local joint struggles, demonstrations, the general strike directed by the Federation, and local strikes of Hitachi workers and the workers of other enterprises together—these were the ways and means of the struggle<sup>43)</sup>.

In this struggle too, the leaders and active members of the unions were arrested, which aggravated the struggle; on the 10th August the Federation accepted the proposal of the management to end the struggle. This was a significant event which symbolized the frustration of the struggle policy of Sanbetsu Kaigi. On the 29th

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40) *Ibid.*, p. 110.

41) *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

42) *Ibid.*, p. 101.

43) *Ibid.*, p. 101.

October, two months later, the Japan Electric Power Industry Workers' Union decided to withdraw from Sanbetsu Kaigi.

General MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied Occupation Forces in Japan, ordered the purge of all twenty-four members of the central committee of the Communist Party on the 6th June, and of the leaders of the *Red Flag* on the next day. He furthermore prohibited the issue of the *Red Flag* on the 26th June, which was the day following the breakout of the Korean War, and that of the bulletins of lower organs of the Communist Party on the 17th July. He also ordered the dissolution of the Liaison Council of All Trade Unions of Japan, purging twelve executives. The afore-mentioned Red Purge was put in force under such circumstances.

In contrast with the methodical suppression of communists and their sympathizers, the General Headquarters played an important role in the establishment of Sōhyō (the 11th July) through its methodical guidance of and interference in the democratizing factions. In regard to this situation Mr. Matsuta Hosoya states:

The occupation authorities, who had despatched five Japanese delegates to the inaugural meeting of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions held in London, began to play a positive part in the unified movement with their conceptions. The authorities sent members of the Labour Section to persuade powerful industrial unions to follow the unifying policy. At the same time they invited the representatives of powerful industrial unions—this was opposed by some members of the national preparatory meeting for unifying trade unions—and tried by force of suppression to make those unions observe the intentions of the authorities. In addition, the members of the Labour Section themselves tried to reorganize the unions of the iron and steel industry and of harbor works. Thus, Sōhyō was interfered with by the occupation authorities at the very beginning of its formation<sup>44)</sup>.

Such circumstances prevented Shinsanbetsu (the New National Federation of Industrial Organizations) which insisted on the autonomy of trade unions from taking part in Sōhyō. Concerning the amalgamation of Sōdōmei into Sōhyō there was antagonism between leftists and rightists, which caused the breakup of Sōdōmei: the leftists amalgamated themselves into Sōhyō whereas the rightists remained in Sōdōmei and strengthened the organization. So Sōhyō started its activity with three million five hundred thousand members from nineteen industrial unions. In the meantime "the democratizing faction which succeeded in removing the control of unions from the communist faction could neither exclude the interference of the occupation authorities nor achieve the unification of trade unions for itself."<sup>45)</sup>

Sōhyō stated in the declaration at its rally that "we are to exclude the Japan Communist Party's control of unions and the policy of a Bolshevistic revolution." Its fundamental principles acceded to the spirit of those of the I.C.F.T.U., but

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44) Matsuta Hosoya, *The Labour Movement in Japan*, p. 121-122.

45) *Ibid.*, p. 123.

“did not reveal any clear direction in respect to some urgent problems such as those of organization and ordinary struggles.”<sup>46)</sup> Sōhyō, which was established with the assistance of the occupation forces and the tacit support of management, lamented its ill luck as a ‘Potsdam union’ and could not so far pronounce what to do; yet it was of great significance that the organization was actually established. The event was symptomatic of the termination of a labour movement whose leaders aimed at acquiring revolutionary power. It also indicated the reestablishment of the wage system based on seniority and of intra-enterprise unions based on this system, in short, the reestablishment of the old Japanese labour-management relations.

While Sanbetsu Kaigi and the respective industrial unions and trade unions belonging to it were fighting against political power, ‘occupation power’, and local power, the democratizing factions were being formed in opposition to them; and the employees’ union—the intra-enterprise union, namely, the independent trade union within an enterprise—which was in accord with the payability of the enterprise was steadily securing its footing in many enterprises.

#### **IV The Establishment of Japanese Labour-Management Relations and its Significance**

The leaders of the struggles for higher wages in the days of Sanbetsu Kaigi had adhered to the policy of raising the wage base; they had hardly regulated wages and other working conditions in accordance with occupations and industries except for the Densan wage system, nor had they intended to do so. For political purposes they had cooperated, but for economic ones they had had no authority to regulate wages and other working conditions throughout industrial unions. These had been solely determined by management at their own convenience inside the enterprise; on the contrary, the intra-enterprise union could only have influenced management to increase the wage base and against the intensification of labour, the rationalization of production, and the dismissal of personnel to some extent.

In paying wages to respective workers according to the wage base fixed beforehand, management assessed a worker in accordance with the standards of school career, employment type (normal of new graduates, intermediate employment, regular or temporary employment and so on), seniority (length of service) and ‘degree of contribution to the enterprise’. Thus, they succeeded in completely commanding the right of assessment. This was how the wage system based on seniority, that is, an intra-enterprise system of wages, derived from the payability of the enterprise and not regulated autonomously on the occupational and industrial levels came to be established.

The second union, which had been formed in opposition to the struggle for

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46) *Ibid.*, p. 123.

power and to the radical leaders 'neglecting the real circumstances of the enterprises' and on the basis of the seniority-wage system, turned into the intra-enterprise union which gave consideration to the payability of the enterprise. The second union secured its position as the intra-enterprise union in Japanese labour-management relations by holding the leadership in the union movement. The establishment of *Sōhyō* showed exactly how Japanese labour-management relations had been built up on the basis of the seniority-wage system and the intra-enterprise union. The industrial union had neither the authority to conclude collective bargaining nor that to strike; it was nothing but an industrial organ of intra-enterprise unions for purposes of liaison and joint struggle. As a result complete autonomy was enjoyed by the leaders of intra-enterprise union. Those who were qualified to be members or officials of such unions were legally limited to the employees of an enterprise. Consequently, dismissed and retired employees would lose their qualification for membership and leadership of the union.

The Public Corporation Labour Relations Law regulates this in Clause 3, Article 4: Those who are not employees of public corporations cannot be members or officials of the employees' unions of public corporations. Under such circumstances the basis of workers' combination on the occupational and industrial levels completely lost; workers' combination can be admitted only in respective enterprises. In consequence of the seniority-wage system in which management command the right to distribute wages, however, employees of an enterprise are made to be competent with one another. As a result workers' combination in respective enterprises becomes a weak one involving the possibility of incessant breaks-up in the trade unions.

Oligopolistic enterprises control the sum total of wages by means of a wage base, and also the assessment of payment by means of the seniority-wage system. Adhering to a low-wage policy and managing to improve the efficiency of labour, they fix the sum of the labour cost after setting aside a certain sum for profit. Being intra-enterprise unions which are in favour of the payability of the enterprise, Japanese trade unions fail to break through such policies of enterprises. If they try to do so, they break themselves up. Thus, seniority-based labour-management relations are nothing but primitive capitalist labour-management relations.

In such labour-management relations, the functions of an intra-enterprise union are not to regulate wages and other working conditions, but to open a struggle for a higher wage base, absolutely to oppose the dismissal of workers, the intensification of labour, the rationalization of production, and the transposition and degradation of workers, and to influence management. In such conditions, no definite rate of wages exists nor does a rule of rise in pay and promotion; the range of, the authority over, and the responsibility for business are indefinite; labour is irregular; and the full number of personnel and the quantity of work are not prescribed. Here there are no restrictive practices fixed by autonomous and compulsory regulations about

wages and other working conditions, the most important objects for a trade union. An employed worker is exclusively protected from the offensive of low-wage workers in minor enterprises by his status and continuous service in and his loyalty to the enterprise; if his continuous service, industry, and loyalty were admitted by management, he would be able to gain exclusive promotion.

What strengthens seniority-based labour-management relations are the welfare facilities in the enterprise, such as company houses or retiring allowances. In such relations even the benefit of a health insurance society (which is to be set up in an enterprise having more than 1,000 employees.) has the function of a welfare facility. All these welfare facilities subordinate employees materially and psychologically to the enterprise. Then, what vicissitude have the seniority-based labour-management relations undergone, which were established on the occasion of the formation of *Sōhyō*? This will be the subject to be discussed later.